

The Church's prayer for Sunday 16th May

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 16th May

A New Testament reading from Acts, Chapter 1:15-17,21-end

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, “Brothers and sisters, ^a the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

A Gospel reading from the Gospel of John, Chapter 17 verses 6-19

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

⁶ “I have revealed you ^a to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect



them by the power of¹¹ your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by¹³ that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³ "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by¹⁸ the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

A reflection from Revd Claire Robertson, lead minister of Barton, Coton, Harlton and Haslingfield

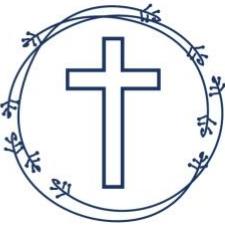
We have recently had local elections to determine who our councillors and police commissioners will be. Whilst there are many candidates only one can be chosen for each post. People vote, often for a party rather than the individual who stands, which probably makes not being the successful candidate easier to bear.

In today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear about another type of election – the choosing of an apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot, as one of the twelve. All we know about the two candidates, Barsabbus Justus and Matthias, is that they have been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry until his Ascension. They have been proposed after much prayer by a group of 120 men and women.

The followers of Jesus are choosing an individual not a party candidate which makes the election rather more personal.

When Matthias is chosen, I wonder how he feels? Is he joyful or is he daunted by the weight of the office he now holds - or perhaps he experiences both emotions.

And Barsabbus Justus – is he crushed by not being chosen or is he rather relieved not to be involved in the governance of the church at that level so he can go out and engage in some particular type of mission?



The Bible tells us no more about either of these men but in Christian tradition there is a legend that Barsabbus Justus became a bishop and he is venerated as a saint. He offered himself for service and God led him to where he was needed – to a little village just 20 miles north west of Jerusalem. God had a plan for him as he has a plan for each one of us.

As Cardinal Newman famously said :

"God has created me to do him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission; I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons."

This Sunday, marks the end of Christian Aid week where we are reminded of the need to be in solidarity and relationship with our sisters and brothers across the world. To quote Newman , we are called to be "a link in a chain". This Sunday also falls between the Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost, when we are invited to pray to God the Father "Thy kingdom come thy will be done".

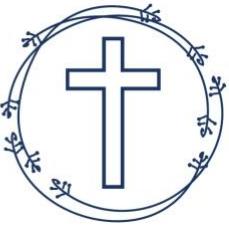
These words from the Lord's Prayer are so familiar to us, but how do we discern what God's will is for us and for the world? One thing is clear and that is that we need both prayer and action. One without the other is not enough. Through prayer and action God will strengthen our relationship with him and with each other and we will have "a part in a great work".

The charity Christian Aid encourages us to both pray and act for a world where poverty is history. It focuses on the poor and dispossessed because the mission of Jesus also focuses on them. It invites us to engage, as the liberation theologians do, by taking action for God's kingdom and then reflecting through prayer on those actions and continuing that circle of action and prayer.

The great liberation theologian Gutierrez tells us that by choosing to send his Only Son to be born in a stable and to minister not in Rome, the centre of the Empire, but in despised and insignificant Galilee, God shows his preferential love for the poor as well as the universality of his love. At the start of his public ministry, Jesus emphasised that he came "to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:21-22) thus "making a personal option for the poor". In allowing himself to undergo the death of a criminal, Jesus again identified himself with the marginalised.

Christian Aid invites us to identify with the marginalised too, by funding projects in developing countries through our financial contributions and challenging unjust

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structures in our world. This year the focus is on seeking to reduce climate change. The effects of climate change are catastrophic now for those in developing countries as well as being catastrophic for all of us in the future.

So, this week, let us take action by generously supporting Christian Aid financially if we are able to do so, and by changing something in our lifestyle to help reduce climate change. Then, in the best traditions of the early church and the liberation theologians, let us reflect prayerfully on what God is calling us to do as individuals and as a church as we offer our service to God and see where he leads us.

Amen